

Seton Hall University eRepository @ Seton Hall

Theses

1999

"Standing Before Them In Boy's Trouser's Was Robin": Possession and Gender in Djuna Barnes' Nightwood

Craig E. Dolce

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Dolce, Craig E., ""Standing Before Them In Boy's Trouser's Was Robin": Possession and Gender in Djuna Barnes' Nightwood" (1999). *Theses*. 122.
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/theses/122>

"Standing before them in boy's trouser's was Robin":

Possession and Gender in Djuna Barnes' Nightwood

Craig E. Dolce

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters
Of Arts in the Department of English
Seton Hall University
May 13, 1999**

Approved by:

Matthew Carpenter

Thesis Mentor

James R. Lindroth

Second Reader

In the process of establishing a feminist poetics, critics Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar illuminate the fact that "woman writers participate in a quite different literary subculture from that inhabited by male writers, a subculture with its own distinctive literary traditions," and it is the presence of such themes that depict a text as distinctly feminine (50). *Nightwood*, by Djuna Barnes, is a quintessential representation of the traditions in women's writing which Gilbert and Gubar speak of, for the novel exemplifies feminist theory in its inversion of the traditional gender stereotypes of "canonical" literature; however, the portrayal of gender roles in the novel is often ambiguous. Each main character's identity is paradoxical in both its actions and Barnes' description, and this is also reflected in the various critical interpretations of the text. The novel revolves around the solipsism in the character of Robin Vote, for it is she who destroys the lives of all who love her. Barnes' ambiguous

portrayal of gender, whether inverting stereotypes or at times fulfilling them, is supported through Nora, Felix and Jenny's desire to possess Robin through their projection of an identity upon her.

The contradictory nature of gender presentation is particularly apparent in Robin and Dr. O'Connor. Due to Robin's solipsistic behavior, the traditional archetype of passive female is not present in her character; however, Barnes' portrayal of her as temptress and aggressive destroyer is also consistent with the characterization of women in strong patriarchal texts. The typical role of male doctor as the healer is also inverted in Matthew O'Connor, the cross-dressing doctor whom Nora and Felix seek for advice regarding Robin. By presenting the male doctor as feminine, and the female Robin as masculine, for she too cross-dresses, the novel subverts stereotypical gender roles. Barnes' ambiguous portrayal of gender has led to varying critical views of the text. Feminist critics examine the presence of the semiotic voice, "...of the unconscious as a different, an other, site of meaning which flows counter to the symbolic uses of language," in the form of the novel and most obviously in the final chapter (Burke 112). Lesbian critics try to make sense of

the ambiguity by analyzing how Robin's relationships with other females contributes to *Nightwood's* representation of Bonnie Zimmerman's "lesbian aesthetic."

Before the reader is introduced to either of the two main female characters, the Duchess of Broadback, Frau Mann, is described as she accompanies Felix Volkbein, who will be Robin's husband for a short while, on his way to meet with Doctor Matthew O'Connor. The Duchess is described as having been "somewhat mixed up" with the Doctor in the past, and the reactions of Felix to this comment lead to a vivid physical portrayal of this minor female character:

It was with the utmost difficulty that he could imagine her 'mixed up' with anyone, her coquetries were muscular and localized. Her trade--the trapeze--seemed to have preserved her. It gave her, in a way, a certain charm. Her legs had the specialized tension common to aerial workers; something of the bar was in her wrists, the tan bark in her walk, as if the air, by its very lightness, by its very non-resistance, were an almost insurmountable problem, making her body, though slight and compact seem much heavier

than that of women who stay upon the ground..

(Barnes 12)

Most of the characters in the book are either homosexual, bisexual, cross-dressers, or, as is the case with Frau Mann, "androgynous" (Earle 37). Her feminine "coqueties" are described as "muscular and localized", and because of her description in male terms the Doctor is unable to imagine anyone "mixed up" with her. This allusion to her physical appearance suggests that she is "heavier" than women are who on the ground, for perhaps it is only in the air, with its "non-resistance," that she is able to accept her true identity. It is her mannishness (apparent also in her last name "Mann") that leaves the Doctor unable to imagine her "mixed up" or sexually involved with anyone, and this reflects the Doctor's support of patriarchal stereotypes. The description of her physical appearance continues with more allusions to her masculinity:

...and the bulge in her groin where she took the bar, one foot caught in the flex of the calf, was as solid, specialized and as polished as oak. The stuff of the tights was no longer a covering, it was herself; the span of the tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as

unsexed as a doll. The needle that had made one
the property of the child had made the other the
property of no man. (Barnes 13)

Frau Mann subverts patriarchal stereotypes of femininity
while the Doctor illustrates a misogynistic attitude.

Mann is shown as one who "seem(s) much heavier" than
typical women "who stay upon the ground," an allusion to
her acrobatics, but could also be a metaphor for her
ascension above the traditionally feminine woman. Her
"pseudo-penis," which leaves her resembling a doll, itself
an image repeated throughout the novel, alludes to Lady
Macbeth who "asked the gods to 'unsex' her in the cause of
ambition" (Gilbert and Gubar 66). Throughout the novel
there is the notion of the "third sex" of the homosexual as
being "unsexed like a doll," and this notion is further
apparent when the doctor declares later in the novel:

No one will be much or little except in someone
else's mind, so be careful of the minds you get
into, and remember Lady Macbeth, who had her mind
in her hand. We can't all be as safe as that.

(Barnes 129)

This allusion to Lady Macbeth illuminates the notion
of Gilbert and Gubar that for a woman who "tried to

transcend her own anxiety of authorship and achieve patriarchal authority through metaphorical transvestitism or male impersonation, even more radical psychic confusion must have been inevitable" (66). This is the case with Frau Mann, who is described as "unsexed as a doll," for her attempt at masculine autonomy is futile in patriarchal society because it cancels out any feminine qualities, leaving her like an androgynous doll. Critic Kathy Earle feels Mann's phallicism supports the theme of "disease" throughout which leaves "nearly all characters in the book homosexual or androgynous" and results in an absence of "fertile offspring" (37). Perhaps the notion of disease that Earle reads into the text in her comparison of it to Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* is a metaphorical representation of the "disease and dis-eases" that Gilbert and Gubar mention as a theme of feminist literature, resulting from the patriarchal notion of "feminine" passivity projected upon woman (57-58). The paradoxical portrayal of gender roles in the novel is also apparent in the doll image, for dolls can represent extreme femininity. As Simone DeBeauvoir points out in *The Second Sex*, the doll can be "incarnating the promise of the baby that is to come in the future..." (48).

When we first meet Dr. Matthew O'Connor he is giving one of his usually opinionated philosophical speeches examining the difference between "legend" and "history". The former is to him stories "that are forgotten in spite of all man remembers (unless he remembers himself) merely because they befell him without distinction of office or title...the best a poor man can do with his a fate," while the latter is the "best the high and mighty can do with theirs" (Barnes 15). Immediately "legend" seems to be associated with those marginalized groups of society such as the poor, while history is aligned with those in power, or the patriarchy. This distinction becomes even more interesting from a feminist point of view when the doctor declares that

Legend is unexpurgated, but history, because of its actors, is deflowered- every nation with a sense of humour is a lost nation, and every woman with a sense of humour is a lost woman.

(Barnes 15)

In this quotation, the distinction between the two presents the alignment of patriarchal society with history. The "actors," or members of the patriarchy, "deflower" history, an obvious rape metaphor suggesting the objectification and

violation of women. Contrary to his earlier remark, O'Connor statement here reflects his alignment with women through his warning that woman must resist the "deflowering" of her role as subject, which renders her "lost" and objectified.

One of the first stories told by the Doctor is to Frau Mann depicting a woman treated as a sexual object. It is a prime example of Gilbert and Gubar's claim that women's literature is "strongly marked.. by obsessive imagery of confinement that reveals the ways in which female artists feel trapped and sickened both by suffocating alternatives and by the culture that created them" (64). O'Connor speaks of a woman named Mademoiselle Basquette, "damned from the waist down, a girl without legs," who takes to wheeling herself through the Pyrenees on a board (Barnes 26). When a sailor notices and falls in love with her,

he snatched her up, board and all, and took her away and had his will; when he got good and tired of her, just for gallantry, he put her down on her board about five miles out of town, so she had to roll herself back again, weeping something fearful to see, because one is accustomed to see tears falling down to the feet. (Barnes 26)

This misogynistic attitude of the sailor is described so early in the narrative as a reminder of the patriarchal gender stereotype of the female as a receptacle for male pleasure. It is the character of Robin who will invert this stereotype as she eventually rejects each of her lovers in the text. Furthermore, it is ironic that the recipient of this tale of patriarchal attitudes toward the feminine, Frau Mann, is the one who represents a distortion of this typical femininity. The fact that Mademoiselle Basquette is unable to flee her captor demonstrates how she is literally captive, and figuratively the absence of her legs could be read as the absence of power, or phallus, in this projection of patriarchal beliefs upon the female. The desire to possess Mademoiselle Basquette foreshadows the future depiction of Robin as possession herself.

This early anecdote introduces the bestial imagery that is present throughout the text and associated with femininity. The girl on the board is also described as having the sun "shining all over her back; it made a saddle across her bent neck...", and this description presents the female figure as a wild animal which must be tamed with a saddle in order to be conquered or "ridden" by the male sailor (Barnes 26). Furthermore, this misogynistic

attitude is reflected in the words that Basquette was "damned from the waist down," which suggests that a woman's sexuality damns her. The text's complex portrait of gender is apparent in this quote, for perhaps she is also damned if she exists sexually from the waist down. Simone DeBeauvoir presents this idea when she declares that "...for the young woman, on the contrary [to the young man], there is a contradiction between her status as a real human being and her vocation as a female" (336)

Perhaps the inclusion of such misogynistic views in this anecdote is a reason for the critical acclaim that *Nightwood* has received from male critics, in particular, T.S. Eliot who wrote the introduction to the novel. Frann Michel suggests this in her essay "Displacing Castration: *Nightwood*, *Ladies Almanack*, and Feminine Writing." It is her belief that the novel has achieved a greater acclaim than Barnes' other work such as *Ladies Almanack* due to its "complicity with masculine-dominated views," but it seems as though this complicity is one that strives to illuminate these notions in order to render them futile (40). The representation of feminist themes in the novel supports this possibility; however, it is Michel's opinion that in the text "Barnes's style challenges conventional modes of

representation, but she represents the constrictions of a system that would exclude Woman from the symbolic" (40). The tale of Mademoiselle Basquette supports Michel's reading of the text with its presentation of misogynistic views in order to render them futile.

The reader first meets Robin in the second chapter when O'Connor and Felix are at a cafe, a few weeks after their initial introduction. The encounter is interrupted by a boy from the hotel who asks the doctor to come and try to revive a woman who has fainted:

On a bed, surrounded by a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly over-sung by the notes of unseen birds, which seemed to have been forgotten...lay the young woman, heavy and dishevelled. Her legs, in white flannel trousers, were spread in a dance, the thick lacquered pumps looking too lively for the arrested step. (Barnes 34)

This description illuminates the fact that Robin represents "feminine (passivity, emotion, silence, nature)" in patriarchal culture as opposed to male "existing forms of power (autonomy, reason, speech, culture)" (Lee 207). The symbolism in this initial description aligns her with

nature in the room resembling a greenhouse. The color of her pants suggests that she is aligned with the feminine, or "whiteness" of virginity. The nature symbolism continues with the description of her smell as "earth flesh," and the "phosphorous glow" around her:

The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry, overcast with the odour of oil of amber, which is an inner malady of the sea, making her seem as if she had invaded a sleep incautious and entire. Her flesh was the texture of plant life... About her head there was an effulgence as of phosphorus glowing about the circumference of a body of water- as if her little life lay through her in ungainly luminous deteriorations- the troubling structure of the born somnambule, who lives in two worlds- meet of child and desperado. (Barnes 34-35)

The doctor dashes water upon her face to revive her, and this suggests that she is like all other living "plants" of the natural world in need of water for life.

In Margot Gayle Backus's critique of the text she suggests that this initial description presents Robin "as

'Other' par excellence," for she is a "faceless screen onto which the desires of others are projected" (3). The image of a "born somnambule presupposes that she may be ambulatory," and this state of unconsciousness which she represents is one which she is born into as a female (Gayle Backus 3). Backus feels that the initial description "resembles the Lacanian Imaginary" and, like Fran Michel, "suggests that Robin has never entered the symbolic order" (3). The image of "child and desperado" supports this claim in the sense that the pre-oedipal child "is an outlaw... outside the symbolic Law of the Father" (Gayle Backus 3). This passage sets the stage for her eventual rejection of confinement within her gender role, a theme defined by Gilbert and Gubar, through her eventual rejection of her husband Felix. Robin is further described as

...an infected carrier of the past: before her the structure of our head and jaws ache-- we feel we could eat her, she who is eaten death returning, for only then do we put our face close to the blood on the lips of our forefathers. (Barnes 37)

This passage suggests that Robin has been sacrificed through history "in a pattern determined by our forefathers," but it is her name, Robin Vote, which is

itself "paradoxical" in that it "encompasses the promise of a civic identity for woman" (Gayle Backus 3-4). It seems as though her name suggests that she will have a "vote" in whether or not she desires to assume her gender role as object and possession.

The dual image of Robin, "child and desperado," continues with the description of her as "a woman who is a beast turning human" (Barnes 37), suggesting the two natures of her which "remain undifferentiated" (Lee 214). This bestial image further aligns Robin as female with the natural world; however, as critic Bonnie Kime Scott points out, "this blurring of distinctions ...develops a vast intermediate ground of gender, diversified by racial, homosexual, lesbian, and bisexual identifications" (42-43). This quotation explains the inversion of traditional gender roles in *Nightwood*, both in Robin and also in Dr. O'Connor, homosexuals and members of the "third sex" (Michel 40). Robin is described as "a tall girl with the body of a boy" who Nora comes sees dressed "in boy's clothes" (Barnes 46 & 147). When Nora visits the doctor and witnesses him in drag, he informs her that he is "the other woman that God forgot" and refers to himself as "the Old Woman who lives in the closet" (Barnes 143, 138). It is apparent that each character's identity is ambiguously portrayed.

Although Robin contains masculine attributes, she is also a female victim of patriarchy, and the theme of captivity is present in her silence. After she has a baby boy with Felix, which can perhaps be read as a moment that defines her as female object like the marriage itself, she declares "I didn't want him" and is described by her Felix as "more often silent" (Barnes 49). Her lack of speech illustrates that Robin can not talk about this patriarchal taboo: "she was unable or unwilling to give an account of herself" (Barnes 49). Immediately after this episode with Felix she begins her affair with Nora, itself a rejection of her patriarchal role as mother. Furthermore, the portrayal of Nora as a "somewhat masculine female," for she is "a female subject constructed in masculine discourse," seems to blur the distinctions between genders in the novel (Michel 41).

With regard to the ambiguity of gender roles, critic Fran Michel points out that although Robin is considered to exemplify the "third sex," she also marries and has a child (59). In her essay, "I just loved Thelma: Djuna Barnes and the Construction of Bisexuality," Michel notes the paradox that Nora is not considered a member of the "third sex" even though she is the "only major female character whose

only sexual relationship in the book is with another woman" (59).

With regard to Gilber and Gubars themes common to feminist texts, Robin's swift departure from her marriage to Felix leads one to believe that she used duplicity in her passive acceptance of her gender role promulgated by Felix, himself a Baron and member of the patriarchy. This is apparent in the manner that Barnes describes the proposal: "...it was with such an unplanned eagerness that he was taken aback to find himself accepted, as if Robin's life held no volition for refusal" (43). The author further describes Felix's desire for Robin as "the destiny for which he had chosen her-- that she might bear sons and recognize and honour the past" (45). These quotes embody the patriarchal objectification of females, and also portray Robin as a possession.

Barnes informs the reader that "Robin prepared herself for the child with her only power: a stubborn cataleptic calm... she took to going out; wandering the countryside ...alone and engrossed," for it is her gender role which prevents her from having an active voice. It seems the only way that Robin may attain any sense of "male" autonomy is to flee from the patriarchal constraints of her

relationships; therefore, her duplicity as a character reflects Gibert and Gubar's idea that

women writers obsessively create fiercely independent characters who seek to destroy all the patriarchal structures which both their authors and their authors submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable (77-78).

From a psychological standpoint, critic Deborah S. Wilson feels that the relationship between Nora and Robin "parodies, deconstructs, and, ultimately, laments a repressively patriarchal notion of romantic love, one that, here, becomes radically cathectic, for it reduces Robin absolutely to an objectified status" (58). In her article "Dora, Nora, and their Professor: The 'Talking Cure', Nightwood, and the Feminist Pedagogy," Wilson also presents the notion that it is Nora who represents the masculine in her relationship with Robin, for "ironically, the feminine 'other' who undermines Nora's 'male-identified,' subject position is her female lover" (61). Wilson reads the two as representative of the "absolute masculine and feminine binaries," but when Nora has her therapeutic session with the Doctor, this notion of Nora as representative of the masculine blurs traditional imagery (61). Nora describes

how Robin's affairs all led to the women being "driven frantic" and she would eventually come to Nora for comfort, the "women I've held upon my knees" (Barnes 150-151). To this O'Connor replies that "women were born on the knees;" yet in supporting this misogynistic idea that women are subservient to men, there is an inversion of gender roles is seen in this case because it is Nora who represents the masculine when she holds women upon her own knees (Barnes 151). Nora then declares

In the beginning, when I tried to stop her from drinking and staying out all night, and from being defiled, she would say 'Ah, I feel so pure and gay!' as if the ceasing of that abuse was her only happiness and peace of mind; so I struggled with her as with the coils of my own most obvious heart, holding her by the hair, striking her against my knees, as some people in trouble strike their hands too softly; as if it were a game, she raised and dropped her head against my lap, as a child bounces in a crib to enter excitement, even if it were someone gutted on a dagger. I thought I loved her for her sake, and I found out it was my own." (Barnes 151)

The recurrence of the knee imagery, the notion that Robin is the "whore" image of woman that the patriarchy will not tolerate, and the final declaration that Nora wishes to possess Robin as her own for her selfish motives, portray Nora as emblematic of the patriarchal masculine model. As Wilson declares, Robin rejects her classification as a woman in the patriarchal category, as she did previously with Felix, because "female bodies have a history... of refusing to submit to patriarchal control and patrilineal surveillance" (61).

In her essay "Writing toward *Nightwood*: Djuna Barnes' Seduction Stories," critic Carolyn Allen feels that Matthew and Nora's portrait of "the invert, the third sex," represents not just a mixing of two genders but rather "the creation of a new gender" (56). It is one who is "neither one nor half the other", yet in this new gender one sees that "a woman loving someone of the third sex loves her as herself and her child," negating the notion of woman as "other" in favor of an idea of narcissistic similarity (Allen 56). This is reflected in the novel when the doctor tells Nora that her mind is always on "Robin who was always the second person singular" earlier in the chapter as the dynamics of their relationship become apparent (Barnes

127).

Later in the chapter the relationship between Nora and her lover of the "third sex," Robin, is addressed when she says "A man is another person- a woman is yourself caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own" (Barnes 143). Allen feels this quote demonstrates that the lover is not "like the self" but "is the self"; however, although they are alike in their gender and lesbianism, they are "different" in that Nora occupies the maternal role to Robin's role as child (56). Allen feels that this illuminates the "second dynamic" in the lesbian relationships in the novel, that is, the lover is "not only one's self but also one's child," which leaves an "imbalance of power mother to child, only righted when Robin leaves Nora to sleep with other women" (56).

In Bonnie Zimmerman's article "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism," she examines whether or not there is a "lesbian aesthetic distinct from a feminist aesthetic," and whether or not a "lesbian 'canon' can be established in the way in which 'feminist critics have established a female canon" (33). She outlines what makes a text "lesbian," for it is her view that "the sexual and emotional orientation of a woman

profoundly affects her consciousness and thus her creativity" (Zimmermann 34). Not only can *Nightwood* be read as a feminist text, but one must also examine the presence of lesbian themes; however, it may be problematical to determine what is considered a lesbian text, for even Barnes, when asked about her sexual orientation, was quoted as saying "I'm not a lesbian, I just loved Thelma" (Field 37). Zimmerman suggests that rather than trying to determine what is a "lesbian writer or a lesbian style, it may be more fruitful to ask how lesbianism functions as a sign within the text" (47). In the case of *Nightwood*, rather than focus on the author's orientation, there are two lesbian relationships that can be analyzed with regard to Zimmerman's "lesbian aesthetics."

In Carolyn Allen's article "The Erotics of Nora's Narrative in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*," she analyzes Nora's conversations with Dr. O'Connor to demonstrate the "lesbian erotics" present in the language (177). The critic states that the text not only "contributes to lesbian theory by reconfiguring classic white stereotypes of lesbian desire," but also successfully captures "the complex dynamics between lesbian subjects" (177, 180). Allen argues that

Robin accepts the role of "child/husband," while Nora takes on the role of "mother/wife," but each character can only assume these roles when Robin chooses the safety that her lover provides (187). Based on this reading of the text, traditional gender roles are destroyed completely as the mother/child dynamic is explored. Nora tells Dr. O'Connor how Robin would be dressed in boy's clothes "holding the doll she had given us- 'our child'- high above her head, as if she would cast it down, a look of fury on her face" (Barnes 147). This quotation presents Robin in the masculine/husband role, not only because of her dress but also the allusion to her having the ability to haven "given" a child to Nora. The mother/child dynamic is most apparent in Nora's desire to "...stop her from drinking and staying out all night, and from being defiled.." (Barnes 151). It is this maternal desire that causes Robin to wander and, eventually, to forsake Nora for Jenny. Allen declares that Nora's realization of "her culpability in destroying the delicate balance" of their mother/child relationship leads Nora to seek out Robin at the denouement (188). This critical notion supports the inversion of their gender roles in the text, for the mother/child dynamic rejects the traditional portrayals of women as

objects of male desire in "canonical" texts.

Allen focuses on the fact that the relationship between Nora and Robin is "connected less by explicit sexual practices than by complex dynamics of power and desire," which is apparent when Nora tells O'Connor of her desire for Robin to

...die now, then you will be mine forever. (What right has anyone to that?)' She stopped. 'She was mine only when she was drunk, Matthew, and had passed out. That's the terrible thing, that finally she was mine only when she was dead drunk. (Barnes 145)

This passage exemplifies Allen's views through Nora's reference to possession of Robin whenever she refers to her lover. Perhaps there is a sense of regret when Nora mentions whether or not she has "the right" to possess her lover, but this notion seems to reflect Allen's idea that "the dynamics" of power between Nora and Robin "produce and reproduce ('draw on,' to borrow one of *Nightwood's* many repeated double meanings) discourses of mothering, gender difference and love in self in another like the self" (178). This notion is exemplified when O'Connor tries to comfort Nora in her state of despair when he declares "I

know where your mind is! She, the eternal momentary-- Robin who was always the second person singular" (Barnes 127). This statement is rather narcissistic, and reflects Nora's desire for possession, for even the narrator declares that "Nora knew now that there was no way but death. In death Robin would belong to her" (Barnes 58). Nora's perception of self in Robin renders latter's identity as one contingent on the perception of others.

In "Two Women: The Transformations," Alison Rieke examines Robin's lack of identity and concludes that "Everyone in the novel seems to be caught up in the struggle to possess or understand Robin" (72). Not only is this apparent in Robin's relationship with Nora, but she leaves her for Jenny Petherbridge, who is also described in the text as one who collects possessions:

Someone else's marriage ring as on her finger;
the photograph taken of Robin for Nora sat upon
her table. The books in her library were either
other people's selections. She lived among her
own things like a visitor to a room kept "exactly
as it was when--" (Barnes 66)

This description demonstrates Jenny's possessive nature, for she has not only 'taken' Nora's lover from her, but she

has also 'taken' possession of a photograph intended for Nora. This demonstrates that Jenny has the same desire as Nora to have Robin, for the photograph may be seen as symbol of possession itself.

Rieke describes Robin as a "pliant, passive woman" who "becomes the object of desire for the central characters both male and female, who revolve around her and try to win control of her," and this is apparent in her relationship with her husband, Baron Felix Volkbein (72). The Baron is first introduced to Robin when Dr. O'Connor brings him to visit his patient. After the doctor revives Robin, Felix sees her eyes as having "...the long unqualified range in the iris of wild beasts who have not tamed the focus down to meet the human eye," and this again supports the description of Robin as beastly (Barnes 37). This portrait takes on additional meaning with regard to Rieke's reading of the text, for the narrator describes the emotion that comes over Felix when he observes Robin as one who "we feel that we could eat...", suggesting his devouring possession of her. His marriage to Robin is foreshadowed when Dr. O'Connor asks him of what nationality the Baron would choose his future child's mother to be and he replies "The American" (Barnes 39). He is not merely suggesting any

American, for the use of "the" suggests that the Baron specifically has Robin in mind. The notion of possession is apparent in the fact that Felix seems to have chosen his future wife before even speaking to her. Rieke illuminates the fact that "Robin becomes the tool of a 'destiny for which he had chosen her" (75). Perhaps the notion of obtaining Robin is most apparent after she accepts his marriage proposal, for while he observes her sleeping, the narrator declares that "...he knew that he was not sufficient to make her what he had hoped..." (Barnes 44). This quotation is a manifestation of the Baron's desire, like both Nora and Jenny, to possess Robin and project an identity upon her.

In the third chapter entitled "Night Watch," the function of Zimmerman's notion that "lesbianism functions as a sign within the text" is apparent in the in-depth description of the relationship between Nora and Robin. As Robin begins to distance herself from Nora, the narrator describes how the former took to the practice of singing songs, which themselves can be seen as a metaphor for the demise of their relationship. The lovers are described as "alone and happy, apart from the world in their appreciation of the world," but the distance of Robin is

suggested in the fact that "there entered with Robin a company unaware. Sometimes it rang clear in the songs she sang" (Barnes 57). These songs that can be seen as a reflection of Zimmerman's notion that "one of the most pervasive themes in lesbian criticism is that woman-identified writers, silenced by homophobic and misogynistic society, have been forced to adopt coded and obscure language and internal censorship" (40). The fact that Robin's singing perplexes Nora, for they are described as "songs that Nora had never heard before," suggests that Robin, like Barnes and other early twentieth century lesbian writers, has also been silenced by society due to her marginal status as lesbian and must speak in a coded and obscure way.

In general, most critics agree that the novel's style, originally called poetic by T.S Eliot in the Introduction, is a representation of the semiotic form. In her essay "Rude Awakenings: or What Happens When a Lesbian Reads the 'Hieroglyphics of Sleep' in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*," Jodey Castricano believes that the "style subverts the symbolic order... and invites the reader to return to that forbidden 'relation' of which Kristeva speaks..." and, in particular, this is apparent in the classification of Robin and Nora's

relationship as one between mother and child.

The songs themselves support Zimmerman's notion, for they are to Nora a reflection of "a life that she herself had no part in; snatches of harmony as tell-tale as the possessions of a traveller from a foreign land" (Barnes 57). This is problematic because Nora is also a lesbian, but as we have seen, whether assuming the role of husband or mother to Robin, Nora seeks power over Robin as a possession. Robin's language in her songs is unidentifiable to Nora, and the songs may be seen as a metaphor for the demise of their relationship because Nora is unaware of why their relationship is unsuccessful, just as she is unable to understand the songs.

After Robin leaves Nora for the company of various lovers, and eventually for another relationship with Jenny, the text exemplifies another of Zimmerman's themes in lesbian literature. She feels that lesbian texts display a particular notion of "unrequited longing, a longing of almost cosmic totality because the love object is denied...", and this is exemplified in Nora's compelling desire to be reunited with Robin. Throughout the penultimate chapter, "Go Down Matthew," Nora demonstrates this notion in her conversation with Dr. O'Connor. Nora tells him that she is

unable to continue living without Robin, and this intense longing is exemplified when Nora equates her unrequited love with the end of her actual existence; she declares that "Love is death, come upon with passion; I know, that is why love is wisdom. I love her as one condemned to it" (Barnes 137). The wisdom that she speaks about perhaps may be a reflection of "unrequited longing" that Zimmerman presents as a theme of lesbian literature.

When Nora comes upon Dr. O'Connor in his own apartment late one evening, the Doctor's elaborate dress reflects Zimmerman's model of the lesbian aesthetic: "lesbian artists and writers have always been fascinated with costuming, since dress is an external manifestation of gender roles that lesbians often reject" (53). This idea of costuming is present in the clothing of Frau Mann and Robin Vote, but Zimmerman's notion is most apparent when Dr. O'Connor is described lying

in a woman's flannel nightgown.

The doctor's head.. was framed in the golden semi-circle of a wig with long pendant curls that touched his shoulders...He was heavily rouged and his lashes painted. Barnes (79)

Dr. O'Connor's dress reflects his rejection of his

traditional gender role as male healer. In "Dr. Matthew O'Connor: The Unhealthy Healer Of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*," critic Miriam Fuchs suggests that "...the line between the healer and the healed becomes tenuous, and the healer is forced to realize that he is no longer immune to various afflictions." This idea is apparent at the conclusion of the penultimate chapter, "Go Down, Matthew," after he leaves Nora and descends into a state of despair as he becomes "exceedingly drunk and now exceedingly angry all at once" (Barnes 165).

The demise of the Doctor as healer is most significant when one examines his successful revitalization of Robin from her state as a "somnambule." Before he is told of her condition and helps the young girl, the Doctor has asked Felix "Why is it that whenever I hear music I think I'm a bride?" (Barnes 33) When Felix replies that perhaps he is neurasthenic, O'Connor replies that would be impossible because "I haven't that much respect for people," and this is an important declaration when one considers that his profession would seem to require respect for human life (Barnes 33). Furthermore, when O'Connor enters the room and eventually awakens Robin, Felix spots him pocketing a hundred franc note that is on the end table, and this can

be seen as a manifestation of flawed character. These instances reflect that O'Connor does not conform to the traditional stereotype of doctor as healer, yet Fuchs points out that both Felix and Nora seek out the advice of the O'Connor since "The doctor knows all" (128). This knowledge seems to be present in his ability to awaken the somnambule by merely flinging water on her face.

His function as healer is also apparent after Robin leaves Felix and he desires to know her whereabouts. When Felix comes to O'Connor, he is told that she is "In America, that's where Nora lives, I brought her into the world and I should know," yet this quotation seems odd since the narrator informs the reader no one has known of Robin for months. Fuchs examines this scene and concludes that "O'Connor possesses psychic powers... he functions again as a healer, able to provide what Felix needs and, in effect, to perform another miracle" (128). This presentation throughout the first four chapters occurs with an omniscient narrator, but after Robin "abandons all her lovers, who then come to O'Connor for advice and solace" the majority of the chapters are presented in the first-person point of view of the doctor (Fuchs 128). Fuchs states that "this change in point of view and slowdown in

plot... indicate an important new aspect of O'Connor's role," for his role as healer is exposed as fraudulent as his "anguish seems equal to" the others who seek his counsel (129). The description of the doctor's quarters, as well as his collapse at the conclusion of the novel support Fuchs' analysis.

When Nora comes upon O'Connor unexpectedly, the contradictory nature of his private and personal lives is apparent in the description. Nora declares that "she had not known the doctor was so poor," for "so incredible was the disorder that met her eyes" that to Nora "it was as if being condemned to the grave the doctor had decided to occupy it with the utmost abandon" (Barnes 78). O'Connor's eventual decline into a frightening state of despair is foreshadowed in grave imagery suggesting a descent, as well as the "abandon" that suggests a lack of concern for his existence. Fuchs describes "how anomalous the doctor's private life appears in comparison to his public image," and this is apparent in the description of his medical devices (129). The scalpel is "broken" and the forceps are "rusty," and this symbolizes O'Connor's inability to heal in a life-affirming manner. Just as Nora is shocked by the appearance of the room and the cross-dressed doctor, it

seems as though O'Connor is sickened by who he is based on the "...swill-pail brimming with abominations" next to the bed.

This presentation of the doctor suggests his physical and emotional disarray, and his disappointment in his gender is apparent when he declares:

for no matter what I may be doing, in heart is
the wish for children and knitting. God, I never
asked better than to boil some good man's
potatoes and toss up a child for him every nine
months by the calendar. (Barnes 91)

Fuchs illuminates that fact that it is Nora who has come to O'Connor "expecting constructive advice about Robin's betrayal of her love, but she discovers that her healer is also in dire need of his own physician and psychologist" (131). The doctor's desires exemplify the ambiguous portrayal of gender roles in Barnes' text. O'Connor does not reflect the masculine stereotype as healthy healer, for in his desire to be a woman his gender is as "broken" and "rusty" as his medical tools.

The doctor's final descent into despair is apparent in his drunken confessions at the conclusion of the penultimate chapter. The fact that he is intoxicated

suggests his loss of control and perception, yet his ramblings demonstrate his awareness of his failure. This is apparent in his lashing out at those who have come to him for assistance:

He began to pound the table with his glass. "May they all be damned! The people in my life who have made my life miserable, coming to me to learn of degradation and the night... What do they all come to me for? Why do they all tell me everything, then expect it to lie hushed in me, like a rabbit gone home to die? (Barnes 162-63)

Fuchs declares that "The only absolute truth for this failed healer is the certainty that his life has been accused" (131). The drunken doctor suggests that perhaps it is the fault of others that he is in a state of despair, and unable to face his failure.

Unlike the traditional male stereotype in patriarchal texts throughout literature, there is an inversion most apparent in O'Connor. The doctor declares that

in the old days I was possibly a girl in Marseilles...am I to blame if I've turned up this time as I shouldn't have, when it was a high soprano I wanted, and deep corn curls to my bum,

and a womb as big a king's kettle, and a
bosom as high a the bowsprit of a fishing
schooner? (Barnes 90-91)

When he speaks, it is with the authority of "his masculine subjectivity and his status of a doctor;" however, this notion becomes somewhat problematic when he desires to be a woman and the fact that he is "not a licensed practitioner" becomes apparent (Barnes 35). Critic Andrea L. Harris explores the role of Dr. O'Connor in her essay "The Third Sex: Figures of Inversion in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*." She feels that the transvestite gynecologist studies woman "in order to satisfy his desire to be a woman" and it is this creation of "the third sex," or the homosexual, which leads to a deconstruction of the "binary opposition between masculine and feminine" on which gender has been understood to rest (Harris 234). Therefore, the novel presents the notion that Dr. O'Connor and Robin typify the difficulties of those whose gender identities are in conflict with the "culturally constructed meanings attached to their sexed bodies" (Harris 235).

Furthermore, the reader is aware that Dr. O'Connor's creation of the woman whom he desires to be is a hyperbole, for "he/she would have the highest voice, longest hair, the

deepest womb, and the highest bosom" (Harris 237). These features of his ideal self are an inflation of the stereotypical woman in patriarchal terms. This depiction of femininity seems less "natural as a result of the transvestite's image of it: drag makes evident the cultural construction of all gender roles" (Harris 237). When O'Connor refers to himself as "the last woman left in the world, though I am the bearded lady," he represents the notion of confinement and duplicity which Gilbert and Gubar illuminate as common in feminist texts (Barnes 100). Because he is masculine, a construct of patriarchal society, he is forced to deny his femininity. Unlike other feminist texts that present the "woman" as confined, it is the inversion of the gender role in *Nightwood* which presents a "male" as one who must hide his feminine qualities; hence, he is confined to his feminine role as "bearded lady" who must use the duplicity of dressing like a man to function within the constraints of his patriarchal gender role.

In her article "Dora, Nora, and their Professor: The 'Talking Cure', *Nightwood*, and the Feminist Pedagogy," Wilson further demonstrates how the text is emblematic of feminist themes with its inversion of the traditional role

of the professor (one who knows) and that of the student (one who does not know). This is apparent in the relationship between Dr. O'Connor and Nora in the chapter "Go Down Matthew." After the final conversation with Nora, O'Connor "stood in confused and unhappy silence," and when she finishes talking we see that it is he who requires therapy, for he immediately repairs to a bar and declares to the barman "to think is to be sick" (Barnes 158). Wilson declares that "the analyst, O'Connor, is hysterical and the analysand, Flood, is rational," and this demonstrates the inversion of gender roles that *Nightwood* exemplifies.

In the chapter "Go Down, Matthew," the reader does literally see Dr. O'Connor's descent into madness. The chapter begins as he comes upon Nora writing a letter to Robin after she has been forsaken by her lover. The doctor's immediate reaction again represents the notion of confinement in the patriarchal gender role of feminine passivity, for here O'Connor speaks authoritatively in his male persona. This feminist theme presents itself in the Dr. O'Connor's demands that Nora "be quiet now... can't you give up... you've made her a legend..." and the idea that she passively accept her role as woman is demonstrated by

his insistence (Barnes 124-125). Furthermore, the mention of "legend" alludes to the first words of O'Connor in chapter one, and identifies Nora, as woman, as a part of the marginalized society, like the poor, not given an opportunity to make history "the best the high and mighty can do with theirs (fate)" (Barnes 15). Her impotence as woman is stated here; however, their "therapy session" quickly turns into a discussion of gender and sexuality with the declaration of Nora that "she is myself. What am I to do?" (Barnes 127).

The conversation that ensues between the doctor and Nora revolves around Robin and her bisexuality, which leads them to question her gender:

"Man," she said, her eyelids quivering,
 "conditioning himself to fear made God; as the
 prehistoric, conditioning itself to hope, made
 man- the cooling of the earth, the receding of
 the sea. And I, who want power, chose a girl
 who resembles a boy."

In her essay, "Nightwood; 'The Sweetest Lie'", Judith Lee declares that the novel's inversions of gender are present when it "caricatures the qualities opposed in the male and female to show that they are inherently incompatible"

(208). Lee continues to discuss the presentation of "narcissistic love," or the "love for oneself in another" in Dr. O'Connor's description of the girl and the prince (Lee 209).

"Exactly," said the doctor. "You never loved anyone before, and you'll never love anyone again as you love Robin. Very well-what is this love we have for the invert, boy or girl? It was they who were spoken of in every romance that we ever read. The girl lost, what is she but the Prince found? The Prince on the white horse that we have always been seeking. And the pretty lad who is a girl, what but the prince-princess in point lace- neither one and half the other, the painting on the fan! We love them for that reason. We were impaled in our childhood upon them as they rode through our primers, the sweetest lie of all, now come to be in a boy or girl, for tin the girl it is the prince, and in the boy it is the girl that makes a prince a prince- and not a man.

(Barnes 137)

Lee feels that the fairy-tale romance "ignores the dichotomy between masculine and feminine," and this results

in an absence of "obstacles posed by sexual difference" (208). The critic concludes that the fairy-tale romance leads to "the sweetest lie of all" because for Robin this experience of "love" leads to nihilism, for all of the "would be princes fail to 'rescue' their princess from obliteration" (208). Lee's contention further demonstrates why the novel is emblematic of feminist themes. Robin's duplicity is once again suggested in this theme of the fairy tale romance, for she is aware of her gender role and chooses to delude her lovers into thinking that she will be passive and accepting, only to eventually leave each one of them for her own autonomous wanderings: "sometimes Robin would return to me" Nora said.. 'but.. she always went out again..." (Barnes 139).

The relevance of Jodey Castricano's comment on the "forbidden 'relation' of which Kristeva speaks..." is perhaps most evident in the final chapter, "The Possessed". The conclusion begins after Robin leaves Nora, for she has gone to America with her new lover, only to once again become "distracted" and begin "wandering without design" (Barnes 167). The reader is told that it is "Because Robin's engagements were with something unseen... in her speech and her gestures there was a desperate anonymity," and her

lover becomes "hysterical" (Barnes 168). Perhaps this is symbolic of Robin's desire to return to the semiotic union of her lesbian relationship with Nora, for we are told she ventures to the area near Nora's house: "circling closer and closer. Sometimes she slept in the woods" (Barnes 168). One sees her wander into a ruined chapel and, awakened by the sounds of her dog barking, Nora herself follows the animal to Robin's "dream like sequence" where she sees a startling image (Castricano 109).

On a contrived alter, before a Madonna, two candles were burning...Before the image lay flowers and toys. Standing before them in boys trouser's was Robin. Her pose, startled and broken, was caught at the point where her hand had reached almost to the shoulder, and at that moment Nora's body struck the wood, Robin began going down...the dog stood there...and down she went, until her head swung against his, on all

fours now, dragging her knees..." (Barnes 169)

In this final image of Robin, one sees both the bestial and transvestite imagery which have been present throughout the text. The idea of Robin "before them" is

also representative of her role as possession. The final image after the dog "struck against her side" is of Robin "crawling after him-- barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching" until she and the dog both give up:

...and she grinning and crying with him...until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees. (Barnes 170)

Early patriarchal readers and critics have assigned the term "possessed" to Robin, whom "they see as fallen and bestial"; and it is no coincidence that such critics see a woman who has rejected "marriage and motherhood" for "lesbian relationships" as "literally going to the dogs" (Castricano 109). The critic is not surprised by these reactions due to the fact that they are a "projection not only of their misogyny but also of their homophobia" (Castricano 110).

Castricano points out that when Nora enters, the hand of Robin is seen making the sign of the cross, but it is a "double cross" due to the fact that she is in boy's clothing; henceforth, her attempt at making a sign as a male is "an action which implies not only her appropriation

of the sign of signification but, more significantly, also Barnes'" (Castricano 111). It is not just her refusal of the traditional patriarchal role "woman", as Castricano points out, but an inversion of the traditional female role through the notion of doubles which Gilbert and Gubar write about:

Even the most apparently conservative and decorous women writers obsessively create fiercely independent characters who seek to destroy all the patriarchal structures which both their authors and their authors submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable... the madwomen in literature... is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. (77-78)

The anxiety and rage present in the character of Robin may be read as resulting from her role as object and possession, a result of the projections of various identities upon her.

Barnes' declaration, "I was never a lesbian- I only loved Thelma," suggests that there may be a reflection of their relationship in the text. In his article, "Djuna Barnes and Thelma Wood: The Vengeance of *Nightwood*,"

Phillip Herring declares that the name Robin is a result of their relationship, for "one of Djuna's pet names for Thelma was 'bird,' and the negative description of Robin's indifference throughout the text suggests the "revenge" taken on her former lover (16). The composition of the novel "helped Barnes to purge herself of the anger and disappointment at the failure of her relationship with Thelma Wood," and this reading may support Zimmerman's notion of a lesbian aesthetic (Herring 16). Robin's animalistic portrayal also supports Zimmerman, for it reflects the idea that "Lesbian, as well as heterosexual, writers present the lesbian as Other" (Zimmerman 46). This presentation of Robin is most apparent when Nora first meets her, as well as the final scene of the novel. Sitting next to each other at the circus, a lioness "regards" Robin through the cage:

...as one powerful lioness came to the turn of the bars, exactly opposite the girl, she turned her furious great head with its yellow eyes afire and went down, her paws thrust through the bars and, as she regarded the girl, as if a river were falling behind impassable heat, her eyes flowed in tears and never reached the surface. At that

the girl rose straight up. Nora took her hand.

"Let's get out of here, the girl said..

(Barnes 54)

Herring declares that this scene demonstrates that the lioness "seems to recognize Robin as a kindred spirit," and this idea may be supported in the language of the scene (16). The fact that the animal is "exactly opposite" suggests its identification with Robin, as well as its descent down, which may be read as the beast bowing to the girl.

This animalistic identity returns at the denouement of the text, and Herring examines Barnes' own opinions regarding interpretations of the animalistic imagery at the conclusion. Herring discusses Barnes' "protests" against sexual readings of the final scene that portrays her former lover as "so unselective and deranged as to copulate with a dog before the rejected lover's very eyes...", for the author defended the ending when she declared that "the dog is not being romantic... it is furious at the mystery of his mistress' drunkenness, a kind of exorcism of what it does not understand" (16-17). Herring does not comment on Barnes' defense of her conclusion; however, his declaration that Robin's behavior is both "obscene and touching"

represents both the interesting presentation of Robin crawling about on the ground and the author's desire not to tarnish the character of Robin's model (Barnes 170). The scene also looks back to the initial meeting of the two women at the circus, for the animal does not bow down to Robin as the lion previously did. The presentation of Robin at the conclusion suggests that she has taken the role of predator, for she assumes the role of the lion as she descends before the dog. This is an inversion of the traditional presentation of the female as passive, and Herring's criticism may be applied to validate Barnes' portrayal of Robin as a sexual predator.

At the conclusion of the text, Nora is finally reunited with Robin in a perplexing ending. As Zimmerman points out, "lesbian literature approaches the theme of development or the quest in a manner different from that of men or heterosexual women" (53). The catalyst of their reunion is Nora's barking dog, for it awakens Robin and leads her to the Chapel, and it is also the reason that Nora ventures out into the woods. Unlike traditional quests in literature that have a victorious denouement, the conclusion of *Nightwood* reflects modernist traditions and the lesbian aesthetic with its inconclusive ending. Miriam

Fuchs declares that the final scene is a reflection of the fact that Robin's physician is "in no better shape than she... there is no medicine and no savior-- only the howling dog", and this supports Robin's regression into an animal since there is no sufficient gender role for her to assume (132-33). The final scene does not present a joyous reuniting of the two former lovers, for the only unity seems to occur between Robin and the animal, as the dog's head ultimately rests upon her knees.

Joseph Frank, in his analysis of the novel during the sixties, is cited as having declared that it would be "impossible to call the central figure of the novel, Robin Vote, a character because '...character implies humanity and she has not attained the level of human' (DeVore 71). This is a prime example of the misogynist attitude of "traditional" critics; however, if the statement is taken into a different context one may be able to apply this theory to Barnes's character, much to the dismay of Joseph Frank. If one is to consider "humanity" as a male being, for women like Robin are not considered "human" in the patriarchal society that Frank promulgates, then I think Barnes would not wish for her character to embody this stereotype. I prefer to think that Robin, as Gilbert

and Gubar declare, is "the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage" (78). In this sense, one can see Robin Vote as a female and lesbian who has truly transcended the patriarchal stereotype projected upon women in culture and society, a woman able to "come to terms with [her] own unique female feelings of fragmentation, her own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are [Barnes herself as lesbian] and what they are supposed to be" (Gilbert and Gubar 78).

In his final scene, Dr. O'Connor collapses to the ground and is unable to get up, explaining that "the end-- mark my words-- now nothing, but wrath and weeping!", which demonstrates his descent into despair. Fuchs illuminates the fact that O'Connor's "words in the café predict precisely what happens to Robin," for she crouches to the ground at the conclusion and reflects O'Connor's collapse (132). Although Fuchs makes quite a convincing critical argument, perhaps this final scene is not a total demonstration of the character's despair, as is the case with the O'Connor's final moment. It is Robin's rejection of all attempts of others to possess her that leads to the character's regression into an animalistic state, for as she barks at the dog she is able to reject all of the

proposed gender roles. The final image of Robin "grinning and crying" demonstrates the conflicting emotional value of her identity as female and as lesbian. In order for Robin to obtain her own identity as anything but possession, it is necessary for her to resort to this bestial state, and invert O'Connor's earlier declaration that "woman were born on the knees" (Barnes 151). The final image of the dog resting on her knees, which inverts Nora's and O'Connor's view that woman were born on their knees, illuminates the complicated nature of her existence as woman and lesbian, for it is only when she possesses the dog that Robin is not viewed as a possession herself.

NOTES

Allen, Carolyn J. "Writing Toward Nightwood: Djuna Barnes' Seduction Stories." IN Broe, Mary Lynn (ed.); Stimpson, Catherine (afterword). *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991.

-----"The Erotics of Nora's Narrative in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*." IN *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 1993 Autumn, 19:1, 177-100.

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood*. New York: New Directions., 1937.

Burke, Carolyn. "Rethinking the Maternal." IN *The Future of Difference*. Eisenstein, Hester (ed.) ; Jardine, Alice (ed.). New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1980.

Castricano, Jodey. "Rude Awakenings: Or, What Happens When a Lesbian Reads the 'Hieroglyphics of Sleep' in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*. *West Coast Line*. 1994-1995 Winter, 28:3 (15), 106-16.

DeBeauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage, 1989.

DeVore, Lynn. "The Backgrounds of Nightwood: Robin, Felix, and Nora. *Journal of Modern literature*. 1983 March, 10:1, 71-90.

- Earle, Kathryn. "The Wasteland of Nightwood." *The Bulletin of the West Virginia Association of College English Teachers*. 1986 Spring, 9:1, 35-41.
- Field, Andrew. *Djuna: The Life and Times of Djuna Barnes*. New York: Putnam, 1983.
- Fuchs, Miriam. "Dr. Matthew O'Connor: The Unhealthy Healer Of Djuna Barnes's Nightwood." *Literature and Medicine*. 1983, 2, 125-134.
- Gayle Backus, Margot. 'Looking for That Dead Girl': Incest, Pornography, and the Capitalist Family Romance in Nightwood, *The Years*, and *Tar Baby*." *American Imago: Studies in Psychoanalysis and Culture*. 1994 Winter, 51:4, 521-45.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
- Harris, Andrea L. "The Third Sex: Figures of Inversion in Djuna Barnes's Nightwood." IN Sigel, Carol (ed.); Kibbey, Ann (ed.). *Eroticism and Containment: Notes From the Flood Plain*. New York: New York UP, 1994.
- Herring, Phillip. "Djuna Barnes and Thelma Wood: The Vengeance of Nightwood." *Journal of Modern Literature*.

1992 Winter, 18:1, 5-18.

Kime Scott, Bonnie. "Barnes Being 'Beast Familiar: Representation on the Margins of Modernism.'" *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*. 1993 Fall, 13:3, 41-52.

Lee, Judith. 'The Sweetest Lie.' IN Broe, Mary Lynn (ed.); Stimpson, Catherine (afterword). *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991.

Michel, Fran. "Displacing Castration: Nightwood, Ladies Almanack, and Feminine Writing." *Contemporary Literature*. 1989 Spring, 30:1, 33-58.

-----'I just Loved Thelma": Djuna Barnes and the Construction of Bisexuality.' *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*. 1993 Fall, 13:3, 172-85.

Rieke, Alison. "Two Women: The Transformations." IN Kessler Harris, Alice (ed.); McBrien, William (ed.). *Faith of a (Woman) Writer*. Westport CT: Greenwood, 1988.

Wilson, Deborah S. "Dora, Nora, and Their Professor: The 'Talking Cure,' Nightwood, and Feminist Pedagogy." *Literature and Psychology*. 1996, 42:3, 48-71.

Zimmerman, Bonnie. "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism." IN Wolfe, Susan J. (ed; Penelope, Julia (ed.). *Sexual Practice, Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993.